

are any certain power of numbers increasing in arithmetical proportion. But it is needless particularly to insist upon these, because one instance is sufficient to shew that those methods are not to be depended upon, from which a conclusion follows that is not exact.

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**XLIV. An Account of the Insect called the Vegetable Fly: by William Watson, M.D. F. R. S.**

To the Royal Society.

Gentlemen,

Read Nov. 24, 1763. **T**HE beginning of last month, I received a letter from our learned and ingenious member Dr. Huxham of Plymouth; in which among other things he informed me, that he lately had, by permission of commissioner Rogers, obtained a sight of what is called the *vegetable fly*, with the following description of it; both which he had from Mr. Newman, an officer of general Durore's regiment, who came from the island *Dominica*. As this description seemed to the doctor exceedingly curious, he has sent it me, exactly transcribed from Mr. Newman's account, and is as follows.

“ The *vegetable fly* is found in the island *Dominica*,  
“ and (excepting that it has no wings) resembles the  
“ drone both in size and colour more than any other  
“ English insect. In the month of May it buries itself  
“ in

" in the earth, and begins to vegetate. By the latter end of July the tree is arrived at it's full growth, and resembles a coral branch; and is about three inches high, and bears several little pods, which dropping off become worms, and from thence flies, like the English caterpillar." An account of this extraordinary production, similar to the above, was given to Dr. Huxham by captain Gascoign, who lately commanded the Dublin man of war, which hath been at Dominica. The doctor subjoins, that possibly I may have heard of this fly; or seen it in the collections of the British Museum, or Royal Society; but, if it is in neither, he believes he can procure it to be sent to the Royal Society.

Though the doctor can by no means think the above relation true in all it's circumstances, yet he is persuaded there is something of reality in it; which perhaps further accounts and observations may set in a full and true light: though at present, as represented, it seems quite repugnant to the usual order of nature.

As I had never seen this production myself, but had been informed that doctor Hill had had the examination of some of them, I wrote to that gentleman to desire to be informed of the result of his enquiries. To which he very obligingly sent me the following answer.

" When colonel Melvil brought these flies from Guadalupe, lord Bute sent me the box of them to examine. The result was this. There is in Martinique a fungus of the Clavaria kind, different in species from those hitherto known. It produces lobules from its sides. I called it therefore Clavaria varia

“ varia Sobolifera. It grows on putrid animal bodies,  
 “ as our fungus ex pede equino from the dead horses  
 “ hoof.

“ The Cicada is common in Martinique, and in  
 “ it's nympha state, in which the old authors call it  
 “ Tettigometra, it buries itself under dead leaves to  
 “ wait it's change ; and when the season is unfavour-  
 “ able, many perish. The seeds of the Clavaria find a  
 “ proper bed on this dead insect, and grow.

“ The Tettigometra is among the Cicadæ in the  
 “ British Museum : the Clavaria is just now known.

“ This you may be assured is the fact, and all the  
 “ fact ; though the untaught inhabitants suppose a  
 “ fly to vegetate ; and though there exists a Spanish  
 “ drawing of the plant's growing into a tri-foliate tree;  
 “ and it has been figured with the creature flying  
 “ with this tree upon its back.

“ So wild are the imaginations of Man ; so chaste  
 “ and uniform is Nature !”

Commissioner Rogers, at Dr. Huxham's desire,  
 has presented this extraordinary production to the  
 Royal Society, and it now lies before you.

A careful examination of it seems to confirm, to  
 me at least, Dr. Hill's opinion of the manner of this  
 phænomenon's being produced.

The ingenious Mr. \* Edwards has taken notice of  
 this extraordinary production, in his *Gleanings of Na-  
 tural History*, and has given us a figure of it in that  
 elegant work.

There is in the British Museum among the Ci-  
 cadæ one, nearly resembling the animal part of the

\* Vol. III. page 262, plate 335.

production before you ; but it came from the East Indies. There is likewise from the West Indies, in its perfect or winged state, the insect, of which this production is believed to be the nympha. [Vid. TAB. XXIII.]

I am with all possible regard,

Gentlemen,

Your most obedient humble servant,

Lincoln's-Inn Fields,

Nov. 15, 1763.

William Watson.

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*XLV. An Attempt to explain a Punic Inscription, lately discovered in the Island of Malta. In a Letter to the Reverend Thomas Birch, D. D. Secret. R. S. from the Reverend John Swinton, B. D. of Christ-Church, Oxon. F. R. S. and Member of the Etruscan Academy of Cortona in Tuscany.*

Good Sir,

Read Nov. 24, 1763. I Received some months since from the Honourable Mr. Lyttelton of Christ-Church, son to the Right Honourable the Lord Lyttelton, a copy of a Punic inscription, lately discovered in the island of Malta, sent me from Rome by Sig. Abate Venuti, antiquary to the Pope, and a gentleman of profound erudition. This copy was inclosed in a letter to the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Carlisle,